Blaxhall Village Newsletter

BUMPER FETE EDITION

Summer 2025

Our Fabulous Fete!

So here we are again, another three months has sped by, and what a three months! It's a bit easy to fixate on the weather in blighty, and it's certainly featured on this page a few times, but usually for the wrong reasons. This time however, it's for the right reasons, one of the longest, hottest summers in living memory, and it even stayed around for Blaxhall Fete!

Record takings and a bumper turnout, in addition to the beautiful weather, made the 2025 Fete the best for some time. We have a full write-up, plus lots of pics inside, as well as a report from the Festival, back in June, the Summer Ball, all the PC and VH news, and the latest from The Ship. There's also good news from the Church, who have confirmed that this year's on/off Harvest Festival WILL definitely be going ahead, and WILL be in the Village Hall, on 28 September. Read on to reveal all ...

Page 2 Church News
Page 3 Council News
Page 4 The Ship
Page 5 History
Page 6 History continued
Page 7 This & That
Page 8 More T&T!!
Page 9 Fete 2025
Page 10 Fete 2025
Page 11 Fete Photos
Page 12 BPC Information

St. Peter's Festival (not as we know it!)

As we all know St Peter's Church is under wraps (see Community Tower website for up to date information) so our Festival this year took place at the Village Hall and was completely different from anything that has gone before! The PCC spent hours in January discussing whether it should take place or not and eventually decided to go ahead but to make it just a bit different! We were totally indebted to Steve who put up all the advertising signs and to Shane (and Angie?)for making them.

The main difference was....NO FLOWERS! But in place of flowers we had "musical teas" with delicious cakes and delicacies from Sheila's catering team and an on-stage "Cabaret" from a pop-up group playing a variety of instruments including handbells; "The Strumming Birds" on their ukuleles and our own Phoebe Nottingham with her French Horn. Lucky us! On the Playing Field, Bill offered to give lessons in Baseball while the less agile enjoyed the more peaceful Boules pitch. Maureen and Claire sold plants donated by Ladybird Nurseries which brought some colour to the very hot day!

In the evening Steve and Paul put delicious Musk's Sausages (Thank you to K for arranging the donation) on the BBQ (kindly lent by Easton Farm Park - Thank you!) and the Quiz teams gathered for what was to be a fiendish but fun challenge, set by quizmasters Thom, Rosie and Vincent. The donated prize was a bunch of tickets to the Summer Theatre at the Jubilee Hall in Aldeburgh, thank you to Marianne Fellows for the donation and WELL DONE to The Shipmates! Hope you've booked your show!

On the Sunday we had a well-attended service in the Village Hall followed by ploughman's lunches and great folk music from Bryony and Lindsay; thank you so much for coming to Blaxhall! And after lunch the tables were pushed back for the iconic Blaxhall Film of lots of singing in the pub (plus ca change...!).

Certainly a different festival but at the end of the day it's Community that counts and that's one thing we're never short of in Blaxhall!

LATE BREAKING - HARVEST FESTIVAL is back on!

....thanks to Graham B! When Graham heard of the sad news that our Festival and Harvest Lunch would have to be changed/postponed/cancelled (see September Ebb & Flow) he got to work on the VH painting crew, twisted their arms behind their backs and made them promise not to start on the interior till 29th! Luckily Matt didn't sue him for assault (phew!) and we can safely say, "You are invited to Harvest Festival in the Village Hall on Sunday 28th September at 10am, and afterwards there will be a Famous Blaxhall Harvest Lunch!" HURRAY!!!

Village Hall

The Village Hall events still prove popular with the Summer Ball in it's 22nd year. We had a beautiful summer's evening this year which helped make the event so enjoyable, along with good music and dancing, lovely food and a great atmosphere. As a bonus the event raised over £700

This year's Fete was a record breaker, making over £3800 to be shared between the Village Hall and the Church. The weather was perfect and the attendance was excellent. Huge thanks to all who worked so hard to make it so successful.

Making it's debut at the Fete was our new tree seat, which proved very popular. A big thank you to Graham and Elaine Barker for their generous gift. It gives a perfect shaded seating area for the Boules piste.

Some of the eagle eyed of you will have noticed that we have started the painting of the hall. The outside of the hall and the storage shed are getting a much needed coat. The inside will be started in October and will be completely redecorated throughout. This is a major job which will completely revitalise the hall.

The hall is available to rent for large or small groups with prices starting at just £12 a session for Blaxhall residents.

I know it's early and we shouldn't mention Christmas for a long time yet, but just a note for your diary, the Christmas Party will be on Saturday 14th December.

Parish Council

We have had a quiet summer with little in the way of parish problems. That said, winter will be on us before we know it, so the parish council already has plans to prompt our farmers to clear ditches and do what they can to pre-empt any flooding issues. More details in the next newsletter.

Graham

We are a charming Grade 2 listed building nestled in the heart of Blaxhall. Just a stone's throw from Snape Maltings, Orford and the stunning Suffolk Heritage Coast, we pride ourselves on offering a true taste of the countryside. Our accommodation continues to be popular, with residents enjoying the hospitality of the pub as well as our beautiful countryside and local amenities. We offer a range of chalets to accommodate different needs. Pictures of our rooms can be viewed on our website.

Our usual menu features homemade dishes made with locally sourced ingredients, alongside our specials board that changes on a regular basis. With our kitchen becoming increasingly popular, we recommend pre-booking if possible. Our kitchen opening hours are Monday to Saturday, 12:00 pm – 14:15 pm, and again from 17:30 pm – 20:15 pm, Sunday from 12:00 pm – 16:00 pm. We have a rotating selection of award-winning local real ales, with one constant session ale as well as our usual range of lager, cider and Guinness. We also offer a range of low-alcohol and a variety of soft drinks.

Many of you would have enjoyed our entertainment, whether that be our folk sessions on Monday afternoons from 14:00 pm or every third Wednesday evening of the month from 20:00 pm. We hold regular events on a Thursday evenings with a start time of 20:00 pm. We offer open mic nights on alternate Thursdays, monthly quiz nights and a monthly spoken word night. Spoken word nights consist of poetry, rhyme and short stories. They can be your own words or someone else's, everyone is welcome, whether you have done it before or are just starting out. There is no pressure to participate, feel free to just come along and listen. Open mic nights are designed to be inclusive, encouraging anyone who wants to perform, regardless of experience. You are welcome to come along and listen if you don't want to perform.

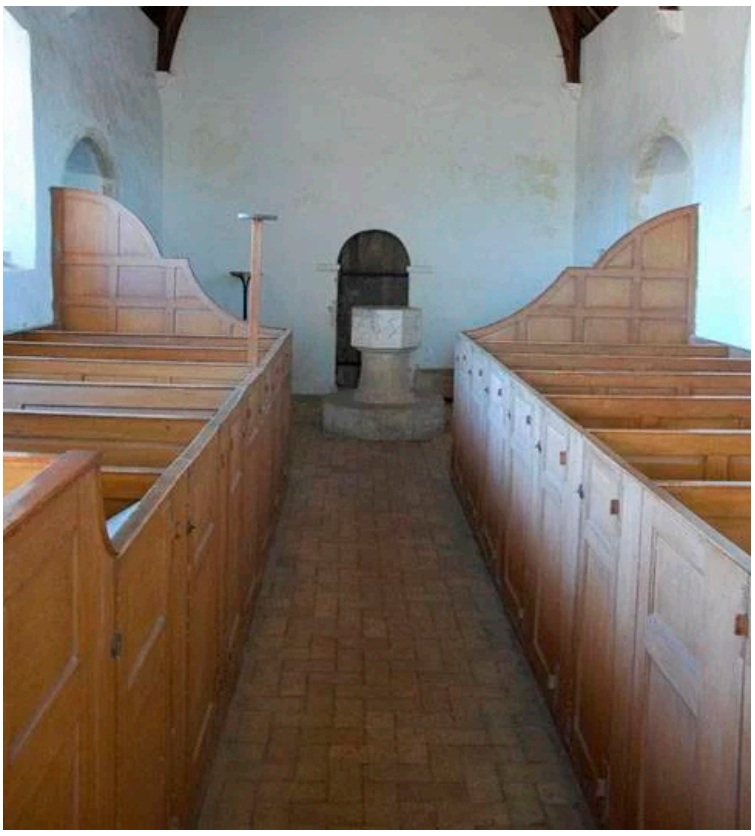
Church Reopening

If all goes to plan, by the time the next Newsletter is published around late November, St. Peter's Church should once again be open for business. After some of the most extensive repairs for several decades, and surely the most expensive ever, the old edifice will hopefully once again be deemed safe, having been closed for over 6 months.

Back in 1862, some 163 years ago, the church was also closed for a lengthy period, but for a major refurbishment, rather than just repairs. It was a time when many parishes were sprucing up their churches, a lot of which were run-down after an era minimum expenditure during the previous century. It was also a time of changing fashions, and Blaxhall wasn't about to be left behind!

On the repair front, the biggest job was re-roofing the chancel, the fir beams we see today are the result of that work. The roof of the nave wasn't in need of replacing, but it was decided to remove the lath and plaster which had been hiding the beams for the last 100 years or more. The slates were temporarily removed while a layer of felt was put in place, not just to help keep out the rain, but also the drafts that had been kept at bay by the lath and plaster.

The manifold alterations included laying the red and black tiled floor we're all so familiar with. We can only guess at what went before; earlier tiles/flags are a possibility, as is brick, beaten earth, or even rushes. Rushes were a popular form of floor covering for centuries, both ecclesiastical and domestic, there was even a church festival called "Rushbearing", associated with the bringing and laying of new rushes for the floor. Rushes were found to be warm, clean and hardwearing, and were certainly still in use in some Blaxhall cottages in the mid 19th century.



Perhaps the biggest change was the removal of the old horse-box pews, which were replaced with the open benches we know today. Box pews were fully enclosed wooden compartments, with a hinged door to gain entry. Popular from the mid 1500s to the late 1700s, they'd fallen firmly out of fashion by the 1850s and relatively few now remain, those on the left being found at Ramsholt. They were commonly around 1m tall, but some reached 1.5m, or more. The fact that ours were referred to by the less common term "horse-box", rather than just "box" could perhaps suggest they were at the taller end of the scale, but there's no firm evidence for this.

The next thing to go was the old musicians gallery. This was at a similar level to the current ringing chamber, but stood in front of the tower rather than inside it. Back then, the bellringers would have stood on the tower floor. The tower had previously been enclosed internally, but was now opened up, allowing a clear view along the church from the newly installed ringing chamber. It's worth bearing in mind that the vestry was yet to arrive, whilst it looks very old, it actually only appeared some 120-150 years ago. That being the case, the doorway in the north wall lead straight outside and was deemed unnecessary for the church's new layout and

the types of service now being conducted, so the new open type pews continued all the way along the north wall, blocking off the door.

Moving east, towards the chancel, the renovations brought about another major alteration, the removal of the rood loft and screen. Rood lofts and screens varied greatly in design, from the very simple, to the very elaborate. We know almost nothing about those at Blaxhall, but a visitor in the 1840s noted that the screen panels featured painted saints, so may have resembled this example (right) from Norfolk.

The loft would more likely have been towards the simpler end of the scale, such as that below lleft, or the slightly flashier offering below right. Access would have been via the now stopped-

up stairway on the right-hand side of the nave, leading to the doorway high up in the wall, now leading nowhere (below, left and right).

There were various other, less obvious changes, but those described produced most of the interior we see today. There are a couple of exceptions, which were still to come - one of them being the organ chamber, which was built in 1898, after more than a decade of fundraising, The other big new addition is the vestry, which was added at some point between 1865-1900, but sadly we don't know when. We do know that the "new" heating - consisting of a coal fired furnace that sent hot air through pipes below the floor - was installed between 1887-1900, and the said furnace was located in a cellar under the vestry, so it's very possible the cellar, vestry and heating all materialised at the same time, circa 1890-95.

Ultimately, as ever, when feeling for the past, there are more questions that answers ...

Blaxhall Bicycle Club

Dunwich Dynamo 2025

Overnight on Saturday, 12th into Sunday, 13th July, 7 members of the Blaxhall Bicycle Club completed the Dunwich Dynamo, a semi-organised cycle ride from the Pub on the Park, London Fields, Hackney to Dunwich Beach, covering some 112 miles.

There were between 3,000 and 4,000 participants, most of whom are highly accomplished club riders, often riding in close knit formation at considerable speed. A good number of the participants did not content themselves with that ride but, on arrival at Dunwich, turned their bikes around and cycled back to London. The Blaxhall 7's attachment to Suffolk is such that the return wasn't for them!!

The Blaxhall 7 departed London Fields at 6.45pm on a ride which took them through the streets of London, the lanes of Essex and Suffolk to the Beach of Dunwich, arriving at 7.45am, cheered on by enthusiastic well-wishers in London and Essex (by the time they got to Suffolk everyone was in bed!). They had a few essential pit stops enroute, most notably Fyfield Village Hall for pasta (many thanks to the 1st Moreton and Fyfield scouts), the Fox Inn at Finchingfield for tea and high protein flapjacks, Sudbury Fire Station for tea and Needham Market for double espressos.

Having left London Fields as the 'Blaxhall 7', they arrived in Dunwich as the 'Magnificent 7', where they were met by their dedicated support team with a very welcome breakfast feast.

For those interested in statistics, the distance was 112.02 miles, the elevation gain was 4,375 ft (Mount Snowdon has an elevation gain of 3,560 ft above sea level!), moving time was 10 hours 27 minutes, average speed was 10.7mph and with a combined age of about 470 years. For the diet conscious, they burnt 3,859 calories.

Summer Ball

The Summer Ball, in its 22nd year, and still going strong! See Graham's piece on page 3 for more.

Pesky Pooping Pooches Polluting the Playing Field with Pungent Potential Pestilence

We've had numerous reports in recent months of dog poo being left on the playing field, both in the central grass area and children's play area. Needless to say it's not much fun for children practicing their sliding tackles around the goals, or enjoying our lovely new swings if they run into (no pun intended) a steaming brown surprise.

Not only very unpleasant, it also represents a serious health hazard - Toxocariasis - an infection caused by roundworm parasites, most commonly found in cats, dogs and foxes faeces. Children and young adults are usually affected due to contact with contaminated soil or sand within play areas, leading to the swallowing of infected eggs. There is, in addition, evidence that dogs can carry E.coli and hepatitis in their faeces.

Please bear this in mind when taking dogs to the playing field, and be sure not to leave any such surprises for other visitors.

Blaxhall Fete 2025

Friday evening and Saturday morning saw the usual flurry of pre-fete activity, with minds focused on the forecast strength of wind, whether it was safe to erect the marquees.

Hard at work, manning the Welly Wanning

Saturday 2pm the fete was treated to a glorious afternoon, sunny with just a light breeze (no sailing canvas), and importantly not too hot, so the dog show, children and adult games could go ahead as planned.

The produce show was impressive, with a record number of very high quality exhibits.

Those less energetic could enjoy the scene from the shade and the beautiful newly donated memorial bench was a big hit and one of the most popular seats on the playing field.

It was a wonderful community social event, with family and friends of all ages coming together to enjoy all the well stocked stalls, myriad of games and delicious Blaxhall tea and cake.

The financial results were impressive, a record the first time the take has topped £4,000, with the net after expenses an equally impressive £3,833 shared between the church, and the village hall and playing field:

Total income	£4,204.85	*2024 - £3,481.64*
Expenses	£371.65	*£405.05*
Net income	£3,833.20	*£3,076.59*

The fete is an important community social event first and a useful fund raiser second, the church tower being cloaked in scaffolding and the village hall due to be painted both inside and out, this income is extremely useful in the village.

All thanks to those local businesses, and private individuals who donated generous draw prizes, and all those who baked, and donated books, white elephants and bottles, and gave their time and energy to help and support the fete - well done everyone!

Mr Blaxhall (who shares his name with our village), noted that if the fete is the 2nd Saturday in August 2026, it will be the 8th - the earliest it can ever be, before in 2027 going back to having a 1 in front (14th). But watch this space for the date for next year yet to be confirmed.

Fete 2025 - Produce Show

Despite a tricky growing season weather-wise the green fingered residents of Blaxhall came up trumps again and the Produce Show tent was filled with a wonderful selection of vegetables, flowers, herbs and fruit. We had a record-breaking 120 entries from 24 entrants covering all but one of the 34 classes.

Our lovely judge John wanted me to pass on how seriously impressed he was that such a small village could come up with such a range of top quality produce, and congratulated everyone on their efforts.

We also received lots of kind comments from our visitors on the display and standard of entries.
I personally would like to thank Karen, Sarah and Sophie for their invaluable help on a very busy day - a great team! My thanks too to everyone who contributed so generously to our sale which again raised a record amount towards the fete funds.

Evelyn

Fete 2025 - With thanks, from the Bottle Stall

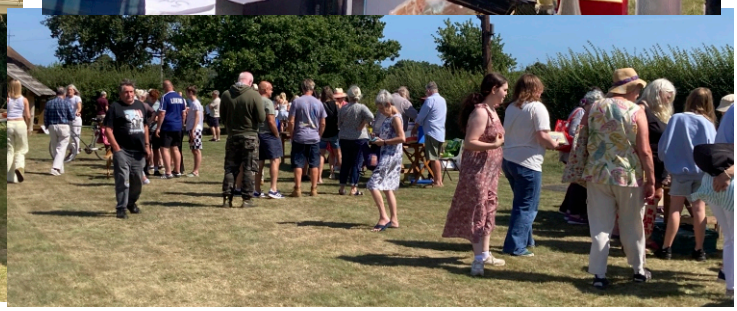
2025 was another excellent year for the Fete's bottle stall, with takings of £520. This was entirely due to a record number of fantastic bottle donations made by Blaxhall residents. The Fete Bottle Stall relies entirely on the generously of Blaxhall residents for its success, so please accept a massive thank-you. Thanks also to the Parish Council members, who collect bottles on our behalf and Graham and Naomi, who allow their kitchen to become a pop-up bottle warehouse for a week.

David

MORE TEA
With the
VICAR?
Pull up a Chair for a chat
or ask me anything over a
cuppa with Rev Rob.

smooth

Barn
Owl
Support
Suffolk



Parish Councillors

Graham Bowles	01728 688192 (Chairman)	Karen Baker	01728 688200
Shane Pictor	01728 885215	Ray Herring	01728 746337
Jonathan Cutting	01728 885115	Mark Oakley	01728 687507
Graham Atkinson	01728 687589	Maria Cooke	
Joanne Peters	01394 459400 (Parish Clerk)		

Suffolk Coastal District Councillor - Tim Wilson 07823 587947 tim.wilson@eastsuffolk.gov.uk
Suffolk County Councillor - Andrew Reid 07545 423799 andrew.reid@suffolk.gov.uk
Copies of minutes and agendas can be found at http://blaxhall.onesuffolk.net/parish-council/

Parish Council meetings are held in the Village Hall at 7.30 and are open to all parishioners, the public and press. The 2025 dates are: **Wednesday 8th January, Wednesday 5th March, Wednesday 7th May, Wednesday 2nd July, Wednesday 3rd September** and **Wednesday 5th November.**

Community Transport – "Connecting Communities" **01728 635938**. The service booking line operates 08.45am to 4pm, Mon-Fri. You can also book a pick-up with "Katch" bus service by using the app, or by phoning **01728 635939**.

Blaxhall Commons & Open Spaces Charitable Trust – www.blaxhallcommonstrust.org
For contact details of all trustees ring Mark Oakley **01728 687507**

The **Mobile Library** has stopped visiting Blaxhall as of January 2025, but currently still stops at Tunstall. For details of where/when use the website or phone number below.

Large print, Audio & Childrens' books, also CDs and DVDs are available for a small charge.
Contact Pete Wells or Helen Hudson via help@suffolklibraries.co.uk, or visit the website **http://suffolkreads.onesuffolk.net/libraries-and-mobiles/**or phone **01473 584563**

To put something in the Village Noticeboard, please ring Graham Bowles 01728 688192
To put something in the Newsletter email to shane@blaxhall.com tel. 01728 885215

Allotment information contact Sophie Martin on 07724 356916, Blaxhall.Allotments@gmail.com

Tree Warden - Joy Shaw, joyjoyshaw@gmail.com, 01728 688309

Previous editions of the newsletter can be found online at **archive.org/details/@blaxhall24** or visit **archive.org** and search **"blaxhall newsletter"**

Newsletter Contact shane@blaxhall.com

Deadline for next Newsletter - 10th November